



Broadcast
Educational
Media
Commission

**Broadcast Educational Media Commission
Engineering & Broadcast Operations Committee
Meeting Minutes
via Zoom
April 14, 2022**

- I. **Call to Order:** At 12:04 p.m., Mr. Dole opened the meeting of the Broadcast Educational Media Commission Engineering and Broadcast Operations committee.
- A. **Roll Call:** At 12:04 p.m., roll call was conducted by Mrs. Gage.

Members Present:

Committee Chairman Matt Dole
Commissioner Geoffrey Andrews
Commissioner Christine Merritt

Also Present in the Meeting:

Executive Director Geoffrey A. Phillips;
Laura Bryson, Chief Information Officer;
Craig Stevenson, Chief of Engineering and Broadcast Operations Officer;
Alina Gage, Chief Financial Officer;
Eric Wortman, Engineering Manager;
Josh Sorden, Broadcast Operations Manager;
John Luff, Retired Television Technology Consultant;
Willy Halla, HA Design

and Interested Citizens:

Kitty Lensman, General Manager of ThinkTV;
Mark Brewer, General Manager of WOUB;
Tina Simon, WBGU;
David Carwile, Administrator of Ohio Educational Television Stations, Inc;
Arlette White, HA Design Sales Associate;
and Spencer Hickey, Hannah News

II. Joint Master Control Review Process

- A. Mr. Dole explained the purpose of the committee is to review the Joint Master Control (JMC) systems at BEMC and make a recommendation to the commission to move forward. The intention of this first meeting is to get the committee up to speed on why the JMC was established. The committee will meet with stations using the JMC, stations not using the JMC, and make recommendations to the commission. Broadcasting technology is moving quickly, and the aim is to offer what is necessary to provide a robust system for stations.
- 1.Ex. Dir. Phillips elaborated the guest speakers for the meeting, Mr. John Luff and Mr. Willy Halla, will provide background of the JMC. Bios for both men are on the agenda. He referenced items sent to attendees ahead of the meeting (posted on broadcast.ohio.gov) and shared saying BEMC is ready to act on whatever decision is recommended by the committee and approved by the commission.

III. Reflections of Project Consultant John Luff

- A. Mr. Luff said the JMC feasibility process began roughly ten (10) years ago with a call from Dave Carwile of Ohio Educational Television Stations, who were investigating the possibility of a joint master control. Due to funding changes at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), not all projects were able to be funded. He worked to create options for approaching a joint master control, including costs estimates. Technical presentations occurred, funding was discussed, and goals determined. The expected cost per station was beyond capital budgets to complete the project for each individual station. It was estimated to upgrade each station's master control would be eight times the cost of a centralized system. It was clear the federal funding for these projects would be expiring soon, so finding a solution was time sensitive; however, Florida and New York claimed all CPB funding.

The conversation turned to how Ohio could incorporate the project. A request for proposal (RFP) was issued to use state funds instead of federal. Most bids received were at least double the budget, so a new RFP was issued with emphasis on IT-based technology system with expandable capabilities as the broadcast technology matured. HA Design was selected from the re-bid. Mr. Luff shared it is one of the more successful projects with which he has been involved over his 50 year career. He was previously involved in JMC conversations across the nation that overlapped service area. With that experience, he learned the most important part of a JMC project was the political will to create a single entity on which everyone could agree. When the Ohio project began, he hoped all eight stations could cooperate at the level necessary to make the project achieve objectives; for the most part that happened in Ohio. He continued the Ohio JMC should be highlighted on a national level as one of the most successful joint master controls projects completed.

- 1.Mr. Dole asked about stations not taking part in centralization, Mr. Luff knew what changed that thinking. He responded that the Federal Communications Commission was involved in a reverse auction to encourage broadcasters to give up Spectrum service. The theory was stations that could move to a difference frequency or give up licenses completely would receive millions of dollars. It weighed on some station managers minds. For example, in San Francisco there were six stations and getting each to agree to financial terms, carrying systems, and competition provisions was difficult. (Smaller stations did not want to be subsumed by larger ones.) He encouraged a review of the Ohio markets and sizes; the same thing that happened in

San Francisco could happen in Ohio. Further, Mr. Luff shared WOUB (Ohio University) received a “significant” amount of money in the Spectrum auction and was able to rebuild their own master control. CPB supports every broadcaster in the United States. In areas that overlap, there is political pressure to cooperate as much as possible to minimize federal dollars supporting competition as opposed to cooperation.

IV. **Reflections of Project Integrator Willy Halla**

A. Mr. Halla, of HA Design, integrator of the JMC, shared a slide deck (posted on broadcast.ohio.gov). The plan was for stations, through their traffic system, to deposit output channels and use the JMC as machinery to push it out. The technology solution was IP-based, technology driven, and scalable for future needs. A timeline was shared of deliverables completed. Software has been upgraded twice (included with the cost of the system) and hardware will need refreshed beginning in 2023. Photos of the installations were shared, and features were discussed, including perpetual software licenses, 30 TB of online storage, and ATSC 3.0/5G readiness, among others. Recent upgrades include new interfacing to Myers (which has changed significantly), expanded AirPro functionality to add Dolby, software which is 8K capable, interstitial capability, and loudness control.

1. Mr. Andrews said Mr. Halla’s comments are consistent with the message over the last 5 years. Mr. Halla shared New York and Florida are going through a hardware refresh, and they are tasked with reducing cost. Ohio was ahead of the curve with the JMC structures.
2. Ms. Merritt asked about the hardware refresh planned for 2023: what parts would be replaced? Mr. Halla said it will be a phased replacement with one third of the project completed each year. Mr. Phillips added the first phase was included in the FY21-22 capital budget; second phase is FY23-24. One of the replacements has already been approved and released by the Controlling Board in April 2022. Ms. Merritt followed by asking if HA Design is replacing the current system as-is or taking advantage of new technology. Mr. Halla said the current hardware is to maintain the software and that it is the software that moves BEMC forward in technology.
3. Mr. Dole asked if the 41 channels (or feeds) currently supported is the maximum allowed or what is currently used and if there is room for expansion. Mr. Halla said there is no limit on channels. Mr. Phillips clarified the system is designed for 42 channels with 5 fail-overs (for redundancy), but can be expanded, when necessary.

V. **Develop Questions for Survey of Ohio PTV**

A. Mr. Dole introduced a survey to drive conversations with stations using the JMC. He would like to know from stations what they would design with a blank state, what improvements can be made, and what benchmarks users of JMC are using. He asked the other members to think of questions and share for the survey.

VI. **Develop Calendar for Next Meetings**

A. Mr. Dole talked about the next meeting dates. Mr. Phillips recommended the meeting with current users occur in July 2022, non-users in August 2022, and recommendation in October 2022. He also asked if the committee members have blackout dates during those times.

VII. **Adjournment**

Resolution 22-32: Motion for Adjournment: 1:08 p.m. –Mr. Andrews moved to adjourn.
Ms. Merritt seconded. The adjournment motion passed via unanimous roll call vote.

Matt Dole, Engineering & Broadcast Operations
Committee Chairman
Broadcast Educational Media Commission

Date